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SECOND COMMITTEE

32nd meeting

held on

Monday, 5 November 1979

at 3 p.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. XIFRA (Spain)

later: Mr. MURGESCU (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 59: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 68: TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

1. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should consider item 59, Operational activities for development, and item 68, Technical co-operation among developing countries together.

2. It was so decided.

3. Mr. MORSE (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme) said that the Buenos Aires Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries 14 months earlier had been a historic event in that it had identified ways of mobilizing the potential and creativity of the developing countries with a view to collective self-reliance and had demonstrated the commitment of the participating States to the realization of the objectives adopted by the Conference to that end.

4. The Committee had before it the report of the Governing Council of UNDP (E/1979/40), and would note that UNDP had already taken a series of measures to translate the idea of technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC) into action. The determination of all the agencies of the United Nations development system to apply the recommendations of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action was clear from the report on progress made by the United Nations development system in 1978 in the promotion of TCDC (DP/373). The UNDP Governing Council, conscious of its responsibilities in that sphere, had decided to strengthen the Special Unit for TCDC, and he had appointed Mr. Hussein Raffay Idris as its chief.

5. The General Assembly, in resolution 33/134, had decided to entrust the over-all intergovernmental review of technical co-operation among developing countries within the United Nations system to a high-level meeting of representatives of all States participating in the United Nations Development Programme, and had asked the Administrator to convene that meeting in 1980 and to submit a report on the organizational and substantive arrangements for the meeting; that report had been prepared and was before the Committee (A/34/415). That meeting was most important, because it would provide an opportunity for development planners and technical co-operation authorities from all around the world, and from developing countries in particular, to assess the performance of the United Nations development system, to exchange views and experience on their own efforts to integrate TCDC into their development plans, and to identify development problems that could be solved through TCDC. The meeting would also provide an opportunity to analyse the initial follow-up by the international community of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, and to correct any short-comings that might have emerged.

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6. The provisional agenda of the meeting covered three major issues: the review of progress made in implementing the tasks entrusted to the United Nations development system by the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, new policies and innovative approaches to further the development of technical co-operation among developing countries, and financial resources and arrangements for the promotion of TCDC. The documentation for the meeting -- and in particular the progress report that the Administrator had been asked to submit -- would be prepared by the Special Unit for TCDC in full co-operation with the agencies of the system; that report would, to the maximum extent possible, respond to recommendation 34 (h) of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action in 'making suggestions to expedite progress through new actions and initiatives', and it would be future-oriented.

7. Despite the progress that had been made, much remained to be done if TCDC was to become a powerful instrument in building the national and collective self-reliance of developing countries, and he hoped that the Committee's discussions would be directed to that end.

8. The CHAIRMAN said that Mr. Heyward, the Senior Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, would represent Mr. Labouisse, the Executive Director, who had been made responsible for co-ordinating the programme of emergency humanitarian relief to the Kampuchean people and had had to leave for that area.

9. Mr. HEYWARD (Senior Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF) said that the 1979 session of the Executive Board had been held at Mexico City in May, and had been preceded by a special meeting on children in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in peri-urban and marginal rural areas. At the end of the meeting a declaration, entitled "The Declaration of Mexico" had been adopted. The report of the Executive Board on its 1979 session appeared in document E/1979/41.

10. With respect to substantive global targets, the Board had decided that UNICEF should work with the targets of the United Nations system that bore on the well-being of children, for example, primary health care and water supply, that it should make inputs to the formulation of such targets, including the new international development strategy, and that it should help countries to adopt and apply relevant global targets.

11. With respect to the direction of co-operation in country programmes, the Board had taken a number of important decisions, on the recommendation of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy; the first group of decisions concerned co-operation with countries, together with WHO, in the implementation of the targets set by the International Conference on Primary Health Care held at Alma Ata in September 1978. It had been agreed that UNICEF's co-operation should be extended to countries specifically to help them to ensure progressive coverage of their territories with primary health care, to train personnel, and to produce some of the essential supplies. The Board had also recognized the need to give special attention, in primary health care policy, to the mental health of children, with emphasis on community-based approaches.

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(Mr. Heyward)

12. A meeting on infant and young child feeding, which was closely related to primary health care, had been organized recently by the Director-General of WHO and the Executive Director of UNICEF at WHO headquarters. Representatives of Governments, United Nations agencies and manufacturers of infant foods had all agreed on the need to encourage breast-feeding and reduce promotion of infant formula.

13. The Board had also approved the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Health Policy on UNICEF's future co-operation with developing countries in the matter of the provision of clean water and drainage, noting that in doing so UNICEF would be contributing to the attainment of the global targets adopted by the United Nations Water Conference, held at Mar del Plata in 1977. UNICEF was already making a substantial contribution in that sphere; he pointed out that in 1978 UNICEF had co-operated in installing water supplies for some 9 million people, including 2 million young children.

14. The Board wanted UNICEF to strengthen its support of technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC) with a view to helping countries to expand their services for children by strengthening the institutions concerned in developing regions and countries. The Board had also emphasized the need for UNICEF's co-operation with other United Nations agencies and with bilateral sources of aid to be strengthened. With respect to other international action, the Board hoped that the needs of children would be taken into account in the preparation of the new international development strategy, and the Executive Director had made several recommendations on the subject. The Board intended to review at its 1981 session the implications for UNICEF of the approved new strategy.

15. Turning to the subject of the International Year of the Child, he said that it was clear from General Assembly resolution 34/4, adopted on 18 October 1979, and from the statements made by 85 countries, that all States wished to see the valuable impetus provided by the International Year maintained. Resolution 34/4 had designated UNICEF as the lead agency responsible for co-ordinating the follow-up activities of the Year, and it would give countries every assistance to expand their programmes for children and to deal with some new problems that were arising in both developing and industrialized countries, while continuing to devote most of its resources to the needs of children in developing countries.

16. UNICEF assistance was distributed among 108 countries. During 1978, its expenditures had been around \$183 million, and the commitments approved by the Board in 1979 had totalled \$251 million. It should be noted that in 1978 more than half of UNICEF's programme throughput had gone to the least developed countries, even though they had only about one-fifth of the total child population of the countries where UNICEF was co-operating in programmes. On the whole, UNICEF adopted a "country approach" and sought to involve communities in the control and development of services.

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(Mr. Heyward)

17. The Board had adopted a medium-term work plan for the period 1978-1982 that was rather a "framework of projections" than a plan in the strict sense. However, that framework would constitute for UNICEF an operational instrument for the planning of its administrative and programme support budget. UNICEF methods of programming had been the subject of a report by Mr. Bertrand, a member of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/ICEF/L.14/03). He had considered it thorough but had commented that a more comprehensive and more analytical presentation and the strengthening of the information base about the situation of children in each country would facilitate the Board's work. Mr. Bertrand had also recommended that the current annual cycle should be replaced by a biennial budgetary cycle, and the Board had agreed to adopt a biennial budget, beginning with the biennium 1982-1983. Furthermore, UNICEF staff had been strengthened because of the increasing volume of assistance projected in the medium-term plan. Especially relevant were the greater involvement of field officers in working with Governments in the planning and design of long-term programmes, the outposting of UNICEF staff to work with subnational authorities at the regional and district levels, the greater emphasis placed on community-based services and on co-operation with other sources of external aid and managing the development of assistance within the framework of TCDC.

18. As the main United Nations body responsible for the co-ordination of follow-up of the International Year of the Child, it was necessary for UNICEF to expand the volume of its own support. Owing to the high level of inflation, the revenue estimates contained in the medium-term plan - from \$220 million in 1979 to \$350 million in 1982 - would probably be insufficient. During 1979, expenditures for the implementation of programmes would probably exceed the commitments approved in the financial plan by some \$20 million. UNICEF would therefore probably reach the minimum prudent level of its liquid resources in April 1980.

19. On 1 January 1980, Mr. James P. Grant would succeed Mr. Henry Labouisse as Executive Director. At the last session of the Board, Mr. Labouisse had stated that UNICEF should keep its distinct identity, remain an apolitical body, both in its general policies and in its day-to-day operations, endeavour to respond appropriately to the greater aspirations resulting from the International Year of the Child and, to that end, set itself as a target figure an annual revenue of approximately \$500 million by the mid-1980s.

20. Mr. Murgescu (Romania) took the Chair.

21. Mr. VOGEL (Executive Director of the World Food Programme) said that, despite the improvement in the world cereals supply position in recent years, little headway had been made in reducing the structural imbalances in the world food economy, which were reflected in the mounting food import requirements in developing countries. Moreover, actual food availability in those countries had declined in the past decade, and, as a result, the number of undernourished people in the world had been rising. In the governing body of WFP, the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, had examined those problems at its eighth session, when it had considered, at the request of the Committee of the Whole of

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(Mr. Vogel)

the General Assembly, the subject of food aid needs in the 1980s. Although no agreement had been reached on revising the present target of 10 million tons of cereals, a consensus had emerged in the Committee that the Secretariat estimates of 17 to 18.5 million tons provided a useful indicator of requirements for cereal food aid by 1985.

22. In the light of that perspective, it was to be hoped that the efforts to negotiate a new food aid convention with an objective of 10 million tons of grains would be successful. But that minimum target, which had been set by the World Food Conference in 1974 and subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly, was intended to prevent famine and mitigate balance-of-payments burdens that would otherwise stifle the development efforts of the countries of the third world.

23. The Second Committee had recommended a number of practical measures for helping the lower-income developing countries to establish national grain reserves and had called on WFP to play an active role in that regard, in co-operation with the FAO Food Security Assistance Scheme. WFP would do its utmost to follow up that recommendation, taking into account the level of its resources and the priorities which it must observe. He was concerned by the fact that the contributions pledged to WFP for the current biennium totalled only \$740 million, against a target of \$950 million. Furthermore, the international emergency food reserve currently comprised only 306,000 tons of grains, against the minimum annual target of 500,000 tons.

24. In 1978, WFP had had to devote a substantial part of its resources to emergency food relief, particularly as a result of the large flow of refugees in Africa and South-East Asia and of crop failures caused by drought. So far, WFP had financed, with the approval of the Director-General of FAO, 50 emergency aid operations at a total cost of \$73 million. New requests for assistance now being processed would entail additional costs of nearly \$38 million by the end of the current year. That figure did not include additional assistance to Kampuchea, where an estimated 2.5 million people were in urgent need of food relief and medicaments. WFP had joined with UNICEF and ICRC in a joint relief operation for those countries. So far, WFP had shipped approximately 22,000 tons of food, against an estimated total of 165,000 tons of food needed to meet the minimum needs of the population over the next six months. Donor countries and organizations had agreed that the Programme should co-ordinate food deliveries in that operation, as it had done in the case of the Sahelian countries and elsewhere.

25. In spite of all those constraints, WFP had been able to allocate \$450 million in 1979 for economic development and nutrition improvement projects, as against \$342 million in 1978. Over 70 per cent of that sum was for agricultural and rural development projects and the remainder for improving the nutritional status of expectant and nursing mothers and pre-school and primary-school children. Moreover, over 80 per cent of WFP aid for 1979 was going to the least developed and the most seriously affected countries.

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26. The allocation of WFP resources was very much in line with the guidelines and criteria for food aid elaborated by the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes and by the Council of FAO. Those guidelines were intended to ensure that food aid was provided "on the basis of objective assessment of requirements in recipient countries" and in forms that were consistent with the development objectives of those countries, as called for in General Assembly resolution 3362 (S-VII).

27. In conclusion, he urged donor countries to increase their contributions so that the programme could attain the target of \$950 million for WFP resources and the target of 500,000 tons of grains for the international emergency food reserve target. The Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes had approved, early in 1979, a pledging target of \$1 billion for the biennium 1981-1982. He stressed that that target was realistic, since grain prices and freight rates had risen sharply in recent months. Consequently, that target should be regarded as a minimum, in the hope that it would be surpassed at the Pledging Conference to be held in New York early in 1980.

AGENDA ITEM 60: UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (continued)

28. Mr. RAMADAN (Egypt), referring to the close links between environmental problems and development, said that the new international development strategy should give due weight to the protection of the environment while respecting the development plans of third-world countries. Co-operation both in environment and in development was necessary to raise the level of living of present and future generations and to promote the equitable distribution and rational use of natural resources. His delegation welcomed participation by UNEP in the preparation of the new international development strategy. The strategy should highlight the social dimensions of development and take account of the interdependence of development, environment and natural resources and the need to provide a satisfactory level of living and acceptable housing conditions for all; it should provide for a ban on polluting industries and emphasize the importance of ecological considerations in the transfer of technology.

29. His delegation welcomed UNEP's work on analysing the close relationship between population, natural resources, environment and development.

30. He emphasized the need to solve the ecological problems resulting from the mining, transport and utilization of natural resources. It was eagerly awaiting the results of a study of the impact of climatic changes on the environment which the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) was to make at the request of the Governing Council of UNEP.

31. In view of the importance which it attached to the question of desertification, the Egyptian delegation supported the efforts which had been made to implement the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and emphasized the important part which the regional commissions had to play in that plan. His delegation was concerned about the financing of the Plan of Action and hoped that the countries listed in paragraph 332 of the UNEP report (A/34/25) would reconsider their position, since they were in a position to give more substantial assistance.

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(Mr. Ramadan, Egypt)

Particular attention should be given to soil erosion, in view of its effects on the economy of developing countries which depended heavily on agriculture. UNEP should strive to assist Governments in dealing with that problem.

32. His delegation commended the Executive Director on his sustained efforts to strengthen relations between UNEP and Member States, and emphasized in that connexion that UNEP should increase its aid to developing countries and also help the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people. Finally, his delegation was pleased to note the increase in the membership of the United Nations Environment Fund. If UNEP was to fulfil its responsibilities effectively, it needed a total of \$100 million for the period covered by the medium-term environment programme.

33. Mr. BODDENS-HOSANG (Netherlands) said that when introducing the report of the Governing Council on its seventh session (A/34/25), the Executive Director of UNEP had rightly stressed the importance of Governing Council decision 7/1 concerning the environmental considerations to be taken into account in the new international development strategy. His delegation agreed that ecological problems should be reflected in the strategy as a whole and not in a separate section. In order to take account of the vulnerability of the environment and ensure a greater measure of sustainable development, it would be necessary to devise better methodologies for determining the costs and benefits of environmental measures. The strategy should also deal with the question of the use of territory beyond national jurisdiction.

34. His delegation welcomed UNEP's efforts to integrate environmental considerations in development policy. The world conservation strategy developed by UNEP in co-operation with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and the World Wildlife Fund deserved special mention in that connexion, as did the regional seminars on environmental development policies and new life-styles, and the case studies that had been made.

35. His delegation approved the proposal to hold a special session of the Governing Council in 1982 and supported the idea of involving intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the preparation of the 1980 "state of the environment" report. It did not agree, however, that the effects of military activities on the environment could be appropriately dealt with in that report.

36. Environmental impact assessment should be an essential instrument of any responsible environment policy, especially with regard to activities with a transboundary impact on environment in general and to the programming of development activities.

37. His delegation also held that UNEP should play a co-ordinating role in activities relating to carbon dioxide pollution, the conservation of tropical forests, and the implementation of the environment-related parts of the World Climate Programme.

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(Mr. Boddens-Hosang, Netherlands)

38. UNEP also had an important part to play in the further development of environmental law, and in that connexion the General Assembly should adopt the 15 draft principles on natural resources shared by two or more States and request all States to respect those principles. His delegation concurred with the Secretary-General's recommendations in document A/34/557 and hoped that on that basis the General Assembly would find it possible to accept the draft principles. The discussion of UNEP's future activities in that field should be resumed in the form of informal consultations in December, and subsequently in the Working Group of Experts on Environmental Law. In its progress report to the eighth session of the Governing Council that Group should propose a number of options concerning future work with a view to submitting a plan of action at the tenth session in 1982. If necessary, the Group might hold an additional session or set up a special subgroup to finish the study on off-shore prospecting.

39. He expressed appreciation to the secretariat of UNEP for its co-ordinating role in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and for the close co-operation that had been established with the United Nations Sahelian Office and UNDP for that purpose.

40. In conclusion, he said that a study should be made of supplementary arrangements for the financing of the Plan of Action. He drew attention in that connexion to the suggestion already made by his Government that ACC should be requested to make an inventory of relevant ideas which had been put forward within the United Nations system.

41. Mr. DIAZ (Mexico) emphasized the need for an interdisciplinary approach in considering economic development objectives in the context of environmental policies. His delegation had supported the detailed study of the relationship between development, population, resources and environment. In the preparations for the international development strategy for the 1980s top priority would have to be given to the development of the countries of the third world, with special emphasis on action on behalf of marginal groups, rational use of natural resources, more equitable distribution of income and creating productive employment.

42. In that connexion legal rules would have to be laid down to govern, among other matters, the ecological impact of the exploitation of natural resources. However, such legal regulations should not hamper economic and social development; its aim should be, rather, to supplement and guide the international development strategy.

43. His delegation noted with satisfaction the work of the Group of Experts on Environmental Law, especially in the matter of regulating offshore mining and drilling; there were still no universally recognized legal rules for such activities, although general agreement on basic principles had been reached at the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.

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(Mr. Diaz, Mexico)

44. It should be noted, moreover, that the International Law Commission had begun a study of international liability for injurious consequences arising out of acts not prohibited by international law, particularly such exceptionally dangerous activities as those involving the use of nuclear energy and outer space, civil aviation and certain specific cases of pollution; it was in those fields that the practice of States and international jurisprudence were full of gaps and contradictions. His delegation believed that the Group of Experts should take those efforts into account when planning its future activities so as to avoid any overlapping of activities.

45. His delegation also considered that the time had come for the General Assembly to decide on the principles of conduct for the conservation and harmonious utilization of natural resources shared by two or more States which had been drafted by a special working group, although reservations had been expressed by some States.

46. It believed that the Governing Council of UNEP could play an important part with regard to the ecological impact of military activities, in view of the serious short-comings of the treaty on that matter which, instead of banning outright any hostile use of environmental modification techniques, actually legalized certain activities of that kind.

47. In conclusion, he stated that his delegation reserved the right to speak again on any draft resolutions which might be submitted on the item.

48. Mr. ABDALLAH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that despite the establishment of UNEP, the question of the environment had not yet been adequately studied by the international community. Owing mainly to the action of developed countries, pollution had become rife throughout the world, and its consequences were manifesting themselves in different ways, depending on the level of development of the country.

49. Deaf to all appeals, the developed countries were continuing to manufacture bacteriological, chemical and nuclear weapons which were one of the greatest threats to the environment in all countries of the world because of the transmission of the destructive potential of such weapons, and specifically, pollution by atomic radiation.

50. Although the attitude of the developed countries was a world-wide threat, its effects might vary from one country to another because of the interrelationship between development problems and pollution. In his country, for instance, agricultural development, and the increased earnings which it could derive from the export of agricultural produce, were being hampered by one consequence of colonialist policy. Every year people and animals were being killed by mine explosions on Libyan soil, and the authorities could not clear the mines because the colonial Powers were not always prepared to give them the necessary maps. At the seventh session of the Governing Council, UNEP had considered various

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(Mr. Abdallah, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

measures to meet that situation, in particular a study on the material remnants of war. His Government had endorsed the decisions of the Governing Council of UNEP, and he urged that everything should be done to implement them and requested all States concerned to give the Libyan authorities the maps which were essential for the economic development of his country.

51. Although all countries were experiencing pollution problems, the link between development and environment was such that those problems were most serious in the developing countries, whose growth was constantly hampered by them. The need to ensure co-ordination of the measures taken in that field by developed and developing countries made it important to strengthen UNEP and give it the means to carry out its programmes.

52. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) said that seven years after the establishment of UNEP, the time had come to assess its achievements so that current problems could be more clearly identified and solutions found for them.

53. Since its establishment UNEP had made significant progress both in what it had actually done and in the analysis of environmental problems which it had made possible. It had set up most useful institutions such as Earthwatch, the Global Environmental Monitoring System and the International Referral System. It had organized the international conferences on habitat and on desertification and had adopted a Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. His delegation, aware of the ecological dimension of development, had always supported UNEP's work; it was a regular contributor to the Environment Fund and to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, was taking an active part in implementing the regional project on desertification monitoring and was setting up at national level ministries, committees and groups to formulate a coherent environmental policy.

54. It was, however, in the field of analysis that the contribution made by UNEP most clearly revealed the magnitude of the work which remained to be done. Current world environmental problems were essentially the product of the fundamental contradiction between extreme wealth, with a consumption pattern based on waste, and extreme poverty, underconsumption and underdevelopment. It was clear that in handling those problems the richer countries' scope for manoeuvre was many times greater than that of the poor countries, which could not modify consumption that they did not possess.

55. The solution of such problems was to be found in the establishment of a more just and equitable world economic order, but UNEP still had a role to play. That made it all the more disquieting that its action was limited by the inadequate contributions of the developed countries to the Environment Fund, which was the only means of achieving the required expansion of UNEP activities and the increase of its technical assistance to developing countries, some aspects of which were still unsatisfactory.

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(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

56. He accordingly shared the concern expressed by a number of delegations about the low percentage of UNEP projects carried out in developing countries; the occasional short-comings in the requests for assistance made by those countries should be treated leniently and should not cause them to be disqualified. With regard to natural resources shared by two or more States, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts had drafted 15 principles which stressed the interaction between the economic and ecological aspects of environmental questions, and he believed that the General Assembly should adopt them without delay.

57. He trusted that contributions to the special account established by the Secretary-General for the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification would be adequate. His country was seriously disturbed by the environmental conditions of the Palestinian people and hoped that the General Assembly would take appropriate action.

57a. Mr. OKWARO (Kenya) emphasized the importance of environmental considerations in economic and social development, particularly in developing countries. He welcomed the fact that several recent actions by UNEP, including the insertion of an analysis of the environment in the new international development strategy, the adoption by the Governing Council of a system-wide medium-term environment programme, and the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, which Kenya knew from direct experience to be of great value, all combined to promote a global approach to the environment.

58. He also welcomed the introduction in 1980 of a strategy for the conservation of fauna and flora and hoped it would lead to the formulation of practical guidelines. However, he had doubts about the practical value of the 15 principles drafted by the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on resources shared by two or more States; while his Government endorsed the content of the principles basically, it realized that they did not define the natural resources which were shared.

59. He urged all Member States to make generous contributions to the Environment Fund and to the special account opened by the Secretary-General for the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. He reaffirmed his Government's full support for the Executive Director.

60. Mr. DEBATIN (Under-Secretary-General for Administration, Management and Finance) said that the transfer of posts financed from UNEP extrabudgetary funds to the regular budget had to be viewed in the light not only of basic principles of administration but also of the particular circumstances of the Organization.

61. The strict application of administrative procedure precluded the use of one type of funds to finance activities of another type. Since it was known that some of the proposed transfers related to actual changes taking place within the Organization, the Secretary-General, in presenting the budget for 1978-1979, had proposed a gradual long-term plan.

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(Mr. Debatin)

62. However, it should not be forgotten that any transfer of a post to the ordinary budget was the financial equivalent of establishing a new post and therefore helped to increase the budget in real terms. The main feature of United Nations budgetary policy for 1980-1981, however, was the need to hold down increased expenditure. Therefore, transfers of posts could be authorized only if there was a specific mandate from the General Assembly or a justification of the same kind as was needed for the establishment of new posts.

63. He observed that that interpretation, though it was a moderate one, had been described as illegal by some members of the Fifth Committee, who had said that they could not approve the funding of posts so transferred. That attitude would inevitably induce the Secretary-General, in existing budgetary circumstances, to keep the transfer of posts to the regular budget to the absolute minimum.

64. Mr. TOLBA (Executive Director of UNEP) assured members of the Committee that he would take careful note of their observations and advice. He wanted to provide clarification on points that had been made during the discussion following his statement.

65. In reply to the comments of the representatives of Italy and Venezuela on energy, he said that the balance between the two components of UNEP's activities in that field would be preserved.

66. He had taken note of the statement by the representative of Sweden on the monitoring of non-renewable resources and he welcomed China's decision to take part in the GEMS programme.

67. The topic of acid rain was to be studied at a meeting of European countries on the subject which was due to convene on 13 November.

68. In reply to the representative of France, he said that, since the report of the Governing Council had already been adopted in substance, only drafting changes could be made to it, and UNEP would certainly issue a corrigendum listing such changes.

69. The question of the transfer of posts to the regular budget had been raised by the representatives of the USSR and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic; he repeated the explanations made by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration, Finance and Management and stressed that it was a matter of correcting a long-standing situation and not of infringing the existing administrative regulations.

70. With regard to natural resources, he thought it would be futile to expect further replies from Governments; he was therefore bound to report that the differences of opinion noted some years earlier still persisted.

71. He had taken note of comments by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Pakistan on activities that UNEP might undertake. In reply to the representative of the Netherlands, he said that he hoped the General Assembly would tell him which subjects should be studied further in order to draw up an inventory of world environmental problems.

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(Mr. Tolba)

72. In conclusion, he promised that in the year to come he would rectify the regional imbalances which had for too long characterized UNEP's activities. He thanked members of the Committee for their interest in the measures on which he had reported relating to the international development strategy, to co-operation among the specialized agencies, and to the special character to be given to the tenth session of the Governing Council. He was gratified by their support for the development and financial strengthening of UNEP, whose chief aim was to provide better service to its Member States.

AGENDA ITEM 64: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR(continued)

- (a) ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
- (b) ASSISTANCE TO THE DROUGHT-STRICKEN AREAS OF ETHIOPIA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

73. Mr. KAFANDO (Upper Volta) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.14 on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo and the United States of America. The Government of Ethiopia was making great efforts to tackle the problems arising from drought and those efforts deserved support; to that end the General Assembly had at the previous session adopted resolution 33/21. He thanked those countries and international organizations that had provided assistance to Ethiopia.

74. There were two changes to be made in the draft resolution: in the eighth preambular paragraph, after the words "continued efforts of", the words "of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator" should be added. After paragraph 3, a new paragraph 4 should be added, the former paragraph 4 being renumbered accordingly. The new paragraph 4 would read: "Calls upon all concerned to ensure that the international assistance provided is used for the sole purpose of relief and rehabilitation."

75. He hoped that, as so revised, the draft resolution would be approved unanimously.

76. Mr. VOUGSALY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that he was gratified by the work of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, particularly in providing relief to Dominica and the Dominican Republic in the wake of the damage caused by cyclones "David" and "Frederick". His country too had received assistance from UNDR0 in 1977, when it had suffered from drought, and in 1978, when it had been ravaged by floods. His delegation was grateful to the Office of the Co-ordinator, to other international organizations and to the many nations that had helped his country to alleviate its problems.

77. He was concerned to learn that, despite the magnitude of requirements of disaster-stricken countries, the contributions to the UNDR0 Trust Fund were increasing only very slowly; he therefore urged developing countries able to do so and developed countries to reconsider their policies on the matter.

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(Mr. Vongsaly, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

78. In conclusion, on the rationalization of the activities of the Office of the Co-ordinator, he welcomed the close co-operation between the Office and UNDP, and the memoranda of understanding that the Office had signed with the IAEA, WHO and the UNHCR, and those that it was intending to sign with other agencies of the United Nations system.

79. Mr. THOMESSEN (Norway), speaking on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and his own delegation, reiterated their support for resolution 1979/59 of the Economic and Social Council, in particular paragraph 3. The Co-ordinator and his staff should be congratulated on the efficient relief co-ordination operations carried out by them in the face of difficulties in recruiting staff.

80. He also hoped that the facilities of the UNDRO Co-ordination Centre in Geneva, which was technically very well equipped, would be used to the full, thereby eliminating the need to appoint ad hoc co-ordinators in some instances.

81. The delegations of the Nordic countries were happy to note that the reorganization of the Office of the Co-ordinator had produced a marked improvement. They maintained their views that the core programme should be fully financed from the United Nations regular budget, and they were pleased with the Fifth Committee's recent recommendation of a further transfer of posts from the UNDRO Trust Fund to the regular budget. They regretted that the Co-ordinator had found it necessary to seek extra funds from donors to pay for vital activities such as additional communications facilities, the expenses of arranging the very important seminars for UNDP Resident Representatives in disaster-prone countries and emergency disaster assistance measures where the current regular budget provision of \$200,000 was clearly inadequate.

82. On technical assistance in disaster preparedness and prevention, those delegations supported the Co-ordinator's efforts to have UNDP take steps to ensure that countries in disaster-prone regions included expenses for preparedness and disaster prevention in their indicative planning figures for development assistance. Preparedness and prevention elements should be included in the UNDP regional and interregional programmes and projects.

83. Though the delegations on whose behalf he was speaking recognized that evaluation would have to wait, they were looking forward to an evaluation of how pre-disaster plans had been implemented and what the views of the recipient Governments were on the relevant activities of the Office of the Co-ordinator.

84. Aware of the need to strengthen the role of the Office of the Co-ordinator in the co-ordination of emergency aid after natural disasters, the delegations of the Nordic countries were willing to support efforts to that end. They were gratified by UNDRO's close co-operation with other members of the United Nations family and with non-governmental organizations involved in disaster relief.

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(Mr. Thomessen, Norway)

85. In conclusion, he observed that the assistance provided by the Office of the Co-ordinator could not be regarded as an isolated technical operation but was itself one of the instruments of development.

86. Mr. CORDERY (United Kingdom) said that the function of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator was essentially one of co-ordination. That co-ordination should concentrate on disaster relief, with the special role of the Office being to serve as a centre for liaison and the dissemination of information, and on planning for protection against disaster, with the Office serving specifically as a depository of information.

87. In the field of disaster prevention, his delegation believed that UNDRO should have a less direct role and should limit itself essentially to the transmission of information to bodies requesting it. His delegation, which was in favour of financing the Office from the regular budget, was gratified that the Fifth Committee had decided to include in the regular budget nine posts financed from the UNDRO trust fund.

88. Mr. BARTLETT (Jamaica) said that his country, which, like other Caribbean islands, had been the victim of disasters in 1979, had been able to appreciate directly the role played by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator. Within hours of receipt of the news of the flood in Jamaica, UNDRO had announced its decision to contribute to the relief operation and had expeditiously arranged for a co-ordinator to be sent to Jamaica. UNDRO had done a magnificent job of mobilizing assistance from international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

89. It was therefore to be regretted that an organization so effective should be finding difficulty in funding its emergency assistance activities. The annual allocation of \$200,000 from the regular budget was clearly insufficient, as was shown by the fact that there was no balance remaining for the remainder of the current year. Efforts should be made to ensure that UNDRO was adequately funded. In that connexion, his delegation suggested that States Members of the United Nations should consider adopting additional measures for financing the cost of recovery in countries that suffered natural disasters, and it drew attention to the suggestion made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago for the institution of a system of regional insurance protection.

90. Lastly, with regard to the proposals announced by the Co-ordinator in his statement, the idea of establishing a pool of developing country experts in disaster-related subjects would be a practical expression of the concept of TCDC. The proposal to organize a second series of seminars for UNDP Resident Representatives stationed in disaster-prone countries was extremely practical, since UNDRO co-ordinators spend a relatively short time in disaster-affected countries, so that much of the follow-up work of co-ordination became the responsibility of the UNDP Resident Representatives. His delegation therefore fully supported those proposals.

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91. Mr. AKIMAN (Turkey) said that he hoped that the strengthening of the staff of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator would lighten the burden on the present staff and facilitate the performance of the Office. In that connexion, his delegation was gratified that the Fifth Committee had approved the transfer of nine posts to the regular budget.

92. The annual emergency relief appropriation of \$200,000, which had been calculated on the basis of 10 annual occurrences of disasters, was insufficient, since the number of disasters could not be predetermined. Moreover, the constant erosion of the value of the main reserve currency had not been taken into account in the preparation of the regular budget. The real value and the nominal value of emergency assistance had thus been reduced to an insignificant level, and it was high time that the General Assembly decided whether or not emergency assistance was an indispensable element of the Office's programme.

93. His delegation's position to the effect that emergency assistance should not be considered a symbolic gesture or a form of aid to be left entirely to the sphere of donor-recipient bilateral relations was well known. Therefore, the emergency assistance subaccount of the trust fund should be contributed to, and the relevant budget provision should be substantially increased.

94. His delegation considered that the activities of disaster preparedness and prevention were essential, and it supported the central role played by UNDRO in that field. In developing countries, there were certain obstacles to disaster preparedness and prevention efforts. First, developing country policy makers, rightly or wrongly, considered that a choice must be made between development, on the one hand, and disaster preparedness and prevention on the other, and they were reluctant to divert scarce resources from urgent development needs. Secondly, in normal times, there was always a tendency to avoid thinking of the possibility of disaster. In order to break that vicious circle, his delegation suggested that disaster preparedness and prevention measures should be placed within the larger context of development. UNDRO could, for instance, prepare studies indicating that there was no antithesis between development and disaster prevention and that a positive relation existed between them.

95. His delegation noted with satisfaction that UNDRO intended to establish a pool of experts working in developing countries in disaster-related subjects, with a view to facilitating their exchange at the regional level.

96. His delegation supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1979/59 and, in particular, paragraph 6 thereof. The problem of natural disasters should be placed in a broader context, and development should be presented as a continuous cumulative process and natural disasters as disruptive elements in that process, affecting not only the environment but also the socio-cultural values of the society and creating an atmosphere not conducive to further development efforts. International, and, if necessary, national measures, which might be embodied in the new strategy, should stem from a broader concept of that problem, so that disaster prevention and preparedness would be an integral part of the development process.

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(Mr. Akiman, Turkey)

97. His delegation thought that, in order to rationalize the activities of the United Nations system and effect savings of funds and personnel, all countries should co-operate with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and adopt the necessary measures to facilitate its work.

98. Mr. KARIYAWASAM (Sri Lanka) recalled the important role played by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator in mobilizing and co-ordinating international assistance to the victims of the cyclone that had struck Sri Lanka in November 1978. That operation was set forth in detail in the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the Office for the period April 1978 to March 1979 (A/34/190), as well as in a monograph published by the Office. He wished to convey the sincere appreciation of the whole Sri Lankan delegation to the Co-ordinator and to the members of the staff of UNDRO for the assistance which they had rendered.

99. With regard to the financing of emergency assistance, the sum of \$200,000 provided annually from the regular budget to meet requirements was totally inadequate, and he invited the international community to contribute more generously to the UNDRO trust fund in the future.

100. Whatever the importance of measures for the prevention of natural disasters, it was clear that some disaster-prone developing countries were reluctant to utilize their limited development funds on projects that would not bring immediate economic benefits; the answer perhaps lay in placing more stress on the development aspects of a project rather than on its disaster prevention elements. His delegation was in favour of the proposal to establish a pool of regional experts on disaster-related subjects as part of TCDC, with a view to promoting exchanges of experience.

101. It was extremely important that no restriction should be placed on the free movement of emergency relief personnel and international relief supplies. Efforts should also be made to co-ordinate requests for assistance in order to avoid unnecessary wastage. Most of the disaster-prone developing countries did not have any established unit to co-ordinate action when disaster struck. The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator could give them advice on that subject and, after the establishment of such units, continue to liaise with them.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.